

B"H

Daily Teaching
23 Kislev 5768
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Miketz #2

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

Joseph's Chutzpah

There is a well known question about our *parshah* regarding Joseph's conduct before Pharaoh. After interpreting that Pharaoh's dream is foreshadowing seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine, Joseph, with what seems like improper chutzpah, offers Pharaoh unsolicited advice on how to prepare for these events. He says: "And now, Pharaoh should seek a resourceful and wise man and appoint him over the land of Egypt...." Who asked Joseph for his advice? Where did Joseph muster the audacity to speak to Pharaoh in this way?

Higher and lower wisdom

The answer to this question about Joseph's conduct lies in yesterday's observation that the number of verses in our *parshah*, 146, is equal to 2 times the value of "wisdom" חכמה. These 2 types of wisdom are what the *Zohar* describes as the higher wisdom—the wisdom of the Torah that sustains and rectifies reality, and the lower wisdom—the wisdom with which God created the world and which He imbedded within nature. The lower wisdom is the wisdom of King Solomon, Joseph's spiritual heir, while the higher wisdom is what inspires the actions that will manage reality in a just and peaceful way so that it can attain its Divinely ordained goals.

Joseph's unified interpretation

Joseph is a man in which both these types of wisdom—the wisdom of the Torah and the natural wisdom—are united into a single thought process. He cannot think about one without contemplating the other. In fact, he does not even think about them separately. For Joseph to describe the ebb and tide of the natural world (his lower wisdom)—in this case, the plentiful crops and the famine that are about to strike the world—cannot be dissociated from a description of how to rectify the situation from a human standpoint (his higher wisdom). The two go hand in hand, so much so that as far as Joseph is concerned, all he did was offer a single interpretation of Pharaoh's dream. He is not offering unsolicited advice. He is simply interpreting the dream and the interpretation, by its very nature, contains two aspects, the reality and the rectification of that reality.



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Twofold wisdom in Shabbat

This unification of higher and lower wisdom is illustrated in the meaning of the Shabbat. On the one hand, the seventh day is a day like any other day, where nature seems to continue on course. On Shabbat a person needs to eat and drink and it rains, or snow, or the sun shines, etc. On the other hand the Shabbat is special because we are not called upon to engage nature in the usual way. Instead, the Torah forbids us from touching upon the natural world and commands us to rectify it by engaging in the wisdom of the Torah, the true force for rectifying reality. This is the secret of the Jewish people and is the reason why only a Jew may keep the Shabbat, but a non-Jew may not. In fact, according to the Torah, the penalty for a non-Jew who keeps the Shabbat is death. This is because man without the Torah cannot truly rectify nature; he can only hope to keep it more or less in its original state.

The non-Jew is not yet sensitive to the secret of rectifying reality, even at its lower level, which is symbolized on Shabbat by the prohibited category of acts called “*borer*,” meaning separation; these actions are prohibited because the rectification of reality is achieved through a process of separation—separating the bad from the good. This is the inner essence of the lower wisdom, the ability of the Jewish soul to clarify reality during the workdays. The sages explain that acts which are considered wisdom and not toil are not prohibited on Shabbat, indicating that the purpose of the Shabbat is to rectify the world through the higher wisdom of the Torah. Thus, the reality created through the lower wisdom continues into the space and time of the Shabbat where it is rectified by the higher wisdom. Both types of wisdom work together on Shabbat: the lower wisdom that creates the world passively and the higher wisdom that rectifies the world actively. This is the inner meaning of the sages’ statement that all the actions of Shabbat are twofold. For example, at the same time that one eats on Shabbat, by keeping the Shabbat, one is also rectifying the food at a level that on a weekday is very difficult to attain.

In Pharaoh’s dream, the seven cows symbolize the Shabbat (the seventh day) and the higher wisdom of the Torah, which appears like a central, pivot point within Pharaoh’s mind. Pharaoh himself represents the profane reality of the natural world and the lower wisdom.

Joseph’s spirit of God

Indeed, upon hearing Joseph’s twofold interpretation of his dream, Pharaoh is full of excitement. Remarking about Joseph, he asks his servants: “Can there be found a man like this in whom the spirit of God dwells!?” Pharaoh himself sensed that the spirit of God dwells within Joseph. Amazingly, this is only the second time that the phrase “spirit of God” רוח אלקים appears in the Torah. The first time was in the second verse of *Bereisheet*: “And the spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” There, the sages say that the spirit of God is the spirit of the Mashiach, clearly implying that Joseph is the

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first embodiment of the Mashiach, who like him, unifies higher and lower wisdom as one. This is a second beautiful link between the first (*Bereisheet*) and tenth (*Miketz*) Torah portions.

Pharaoh's remark about Joseph: "Can there be found a man like this in whom the spirit of God dwells!?" in Hebrew is הַנְּמָצָא כֹּהֵאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בּוֹ. The sum of the gematria of the initials of Pharaoh's words in Hebrew ב א ר א א ה is 230, exactly the same value as the name of our *parshah* בִּקְצֵי, making this a beautiful example of self-reference with the *parshah* referring to itself.